

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



Beehives systematic placed besides sunflower plantation. **PHOTOS: KANU**

MYANMAR'S marketable honey is produced in hilly and plainland areas during the cold season. This year, the country is set to ship over 3,000 tonnes of honey to foreign countries, as reported by the Apiculture Division under the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

Myanmar, rich in forest resources, has the potential to produce organic honey. The country annually produces around 2,000 tonnes of honey for local consumption and exports about 4,000 tonnes. Plans are underway to export over 3,000 tonnes of honey this year. The departments in 24 townships across eight regions and states, along with private bee farmers, contribute to the yearly honey production. The department supervises 1.5 million acres of crops for bees to pollinate.

“In the beekeeping industry, the

Myanmar exports over 3,000 tonnes of honey



major crops are edible oil crops for agriculture. These include winter crops such as pulses, beans, corn, sesame, and sunflower. Bee-mediated pollination is crucial for increasing sunflower seed yield, with bees being the best among insects. Observing bees near sunflower fields indicates high production rates. We have already exported nearly 2,000 tonnes of honey this year, and with winter crops available until March, we anticipate obtaining winter honey. The department is pleased to see the high yield through bee pollination,” said U Kyaw Kyaw Oo, in charge of Apiculture Division of Yangon.

Foreign countries regularly purchase Myanmar's honey, and the expansion of beekeeping businesses can create opportunities to boost export volumes. Sunflower and jujube honey are preferred by foreign countries.

SEE PAGE-3

NATIONAL **PAGE-3**

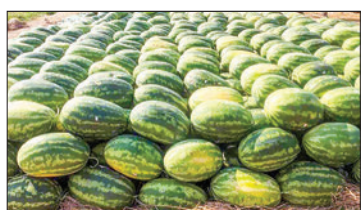
National Security Adviser receives delegation led by Ambassador of India to Myanmar

NATIONAL **PAGE-5**



Exploring Set-Set-Yo: A Glimpse into Myanmar's Cultural Heritage and Natural Beauty

BUSINESS **PAGE-7**



Myanmar exporters advised to assess market conditions for China trade

Myanmar's air quality “acceptable”: Environmental Dept

THE Environmental Conservation Department has declared that the Air Quality Index (AQI) in various townships across the country is within acceptable levels, based on measurements taken as of December 2023.

The AQI in townships such as Dawei, Magway, Thayet, Bhamo, Hpa-an, Mawlamyine, Kyaukpyu, Taunggyi, Patheingyi, Botahtaung, Dagon Myothit (South), Shwepyithar, Meiktila, and Homalin is deemed satisfactory. The air quality in Myeik, Thandwe, Tachileik, Kengtung, Thakayta, Thanlyin, Hlegu, Amarapura, Kyaukse, Madaya, Pyin Oo Lwin, Monywa, Lahe, and Ottarathiri townships is reasonably clean.

However, the AQI of Aungmyethazan Township in Mandalay Region has been identified as harmful to the well-being of vulnerable individuals.

The department uses the Environmental Perimeter Air Station (EPAS) - Haz-Scanner to



Air quality assessment in process.

regularly measure primary parameters such as Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5), Particulate Matter 10 (PM10), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2), Sulfur Dioxide (SO2), and Ozone (O3). — ASH/NT

NATIONAL

Training courses offered to empower coconut growers to produce value-added goods



empower local communities to generate income.

She further explained, "There is a local demand for such products, and we are collaborating with relevant government bodies to ensure the sustainability of the business and secure foreign markets."

The training courses, spanning six days, cover fundamental lessons and are conducted in collaboration with the Myanmar Coconut Grower and Trader Association, the Small-scale

Value-added consumer goods made of coconuts.

THE Myanmar Coconut Grower and Trader Association has announced that training courses on the production of value-added consumer goods derived from coconuts are currently underway in coconut-rich regions such as Rakhine State, Taninthayi Region, Mon State, Ayeyawady Region, and Yangon Region.

General Secretary Daw Hsan Hsan Han of the association mentioned that the train-



ees are being instructed in producing souvenirs, household utensils, and personal goods to

Industries Department, and the Myanmar Hoteliers Association. — ASH/NT

U Aung Ko appointed as Ambassador of Myanmar to the Lao People's Democratic Republic

THE Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Aung Ko, Director-General of the Political Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. — MNA



The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

Plans to promote livestock farms, elephant camps as new travel destinations in Ayeyawady Region

ACCORDING to U Aung Moe Kyaw, the central executive of Ngwehsaung Zone of the Myanmar Hoteliers Association (Ayeyawady Region), plans are underway to promote livestock farms and elephant camps in the Ayeyawady Region as new travel destinations.

The region attracts both local and foreign visitors to its beaches, as well as to the livestock farms and elephant camps. To enhance tourism in the area, the Myanmar Tourism Federation, the Myanmar Hoteliers Association, and the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism (Ayeyawady Region) are collaborating to develop these places as new tourist attractions.

U Aung Moe Kyaw empha-



Some elephant camps seen in the Ayeyawady Region.

sized that the livestock farms and elephant camps are being strategically planned to augment tourism to the beaches and draw more visitors. Addi-

tionally, efforts are being made to improve transportation to these travel destinations.

With its natural beaches and tourist attractions, Ay-



eyawady Region stands out as the most visited region in the country. Notably, there are three elephant camps namely Moemaka elephant camp and

Ngwehsaung elephant camp near Ngwehsaung beach, and Htantapin elephant camp in Ngaputaw township. — ASH/TRKM

NATIONAL

National Security Adviser receives delegation led by Ambassador of India to Myanmar



National Security Adviser Union Minister at the SAC Chairman Office (4) Admiral Moe Aung receives Indian Ambassador Mr Vinay Kumar yesterday.

ADMIRAL Moe Aung, National Security Adviser and Union Minister at the SAC Chairman's Office Ministry (4), received the delegation led by Mr Vinay Kumar, Ambassador of India to Myanmar at the State Administration Council office in Nay

Pyi Taw, yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, the two sides cordially and frankly discussed issues related to friendship and cooperation between the two countries, implementation of development projects and security issues,

and cooperation in stability and peace of the border regions between the two countries.

Officials from the State Administration Council Office and officials from the embassy of India attended the meeting. — MNA/TS

Coordination meeting held on infrastructure work to be completed in advance by Myanmar side for Kyaukpyu SEZ project

A coordination meeting regarding the implementation plan for the infrastructure work to be completed by the Myanmar side for the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone deep-sea port project took

place in the meeting hall of the Ministry of Commerce yesterday morning.

During the meeting, U Aung Naing Oo, the Union Minister at the SAC Chairman Office Ministry(2) who

also serves as the Chairman of the Central Task Force on Myanmar Special Economic Zones, urged the timely completion of supportive work for the project by the respective ministries. — MNA/KZL



Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo speaking at meeting on implementation of infrastructure works of Kyaukpyu SEZ deep-sea port yesterday.

Myanmar exports over 3,000 tonnes of honey

FROM PAGE-1

The high production rates of the private sector and modern beekeeping techniques guarantee export volumes and aim to improve the socioeconomic status of bee farmers.

Beekeeping businesses primarily operate in Pyawbwe and hilly regions for commercial purposes. Enzymes convert complex sugar into simple sugar, and the flavor and texture vary depending on the flowers. China stands as the main purchaser of Myanmar's honey.

The beekeeping business in Myanmar started in 1979 and began exporting in 1985. Myanmar mainly delivers honey to Japan, China, Korea, Singapore, and Thailand. Sunflower honey, jujube honey, and niger honey are the most popular products, with sunflower honey leading the market. China is the largest honey-producing country globally. Viet Nam, Myanmar, and Thailand are the biggest producers and exporters of honey among ASEAN countries. Myanmar is making efforts to increase honey production rate. — Nyein Thu(MNA)/KTZH

MIFER Union Minister receives Russian Ambassador



MIFER Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw receives Mr Iskander Azizov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation yesterday.

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Dr Kan Zaw received Mr Iskander Azizov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and delegates at Office No 1 in Nay Pyi Taw on the morning of 17 January.

During the meeting, both

sides cordially discussed strengthening of bilateral economic cooperation, and promotion of bilateral trade and investment.

The meeting was also attended by the deputy minister and officials from the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. — MNA

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

NATIONAL

MoI UM meets departmental staff, faculty members, students of Bago University, inspects industrial zones

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, accompanied by Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win, met with district and township-level government employees, faculty members, and students of Bago University, along with officials from social welfare organizations at the City Hall of Bago yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union Minister acknowledged the development in Bago Region and highlighted the peace and prosperity of the entire nation, emphasizing the destructive actions of unscrupulous persons through the spread of misinformation and disinformation. He also underscored the need to consider the destructive actions of foreign countries-backed media outlets that broadcast false information. He encouraged participants to read newspapers, websites, and social networks of the Information Ministry for accurate news and learn from the 1988 case in which powerful foreign media outlets spread misinformation and disinformation aiming at the disintegration of national unity and



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn visits Kanbawzathadi Palace in Bago yesterday.

State stability.

He urged the participants to work together with the government in implementing the objectives and roadmap of the government, focusing on the youth sector and paving the right way for them. Subsequently, he handed over MRTV

DTH satellites and DVB T2 Set Top Boxes for the townships, villages, and Bago Region government and military stations to the relevant officials.

The Union Minister also inspected the renovation of Kanbawzathadi Palace and Hanthawady Archaeologi-

cal Museum. At noon, he observed the products produced by MSMEs of Bago Region at the MSME sale centre at Bago Myoma market and One-Stop Shop. The MSME sale centre offers a variety of products from the eastern and western parts of Bago Region at fair

prices.

He also headed to Agro Future Myanmar Co., Ltd in Ottha Myothit No (2) ward to inspect the sales of potable paddy transplanting machines. The steel structure machine has a low oil consumption rate and can transplant five acres of paddy per day. It is also cheaper than foreign-made products and offers a six-month guarantee.

Next, he visited Bago Sports Gloves Co., Ltd in NyaungIn Industrial Zone and observed the sports gloves production processes. Bago Sports Gloves Co., Ltd of The Naigai Corporation of Japan currently runs with 762 employees, producing golf gloves under the trademarks of Callaway, Adidas, Mizuno, Bridgestone, Taylormade, and baseball gloves under Adidas, Marucci, Asics, and Japana brands. The factory produces about 200,000 gloves under CMP system for export per month.

Upon arrival at the industrial zones, the Union Minister pledged to improve the MSMEs via media means. — MNA/KTZH

MoE UM receives delegation led by Ambassador of Russian Federation

UNION Minister for Energy U Ko Ko Lwin received a delegation led by Mr Iskander Azizov, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Myanmar, at the Union Minister's office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, the

Union minister and the ambassador had a frank and cordial exchange of views regarding the matters of building an oil refinery in Myanmar, plans to apply Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in geological and geo-physics measures in order to boost produc-

tion at oil and natural gas fields, and increasing cooperation in the energy sector between the two countries.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister U Thant Sin, directors-general, managing directors and officials. — MNA/TS



Union Minister for Energy U Ko Ko Lwin receives Russian Ambassador Mr Iskander Azizov yesterday.

Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

www.gnlm.com.mm



CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

(+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 255597511

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 251022355
marketing@gnlm.com.mm
subscription@gnlm.com.mm

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.
gnlmnews@gmail.com,
newsroom@gnlm.com.mm
www.gnlm.com.mm

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email aungthuya@gnlm.com.mm with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

NATIONAL

THE Directorate of Hotels and Tourism has introduced seven destinations to local and foreign travellers visiting the Bagan World Heritage Site.

These destinations include Kyaukmyathmaw in the Bagan Ancient Cultural Zone, a 900-year-old tamarind tree in ZeeOHla Village, a 21-acre Sal plantation dating back to the Bagan era and currently conserved by the Forest Department, the Yokesone Monastery in Thelpyintaw Village, Gelmoe Pond in Legwa-Letpan-aing Village of Kyaukpadaung Township, Mount Popa trekking 11 miles northeast of Kyaukpadaung Township, and Set-Set-Yo Village in Ngathayauk of NyaungU Township, where residents still don the traditional Youngpaysu hairstyle.

Among these destinations, Set-Set-Yo is arguably the most famous, known for its residents who traditionally adorn Youngpaysu (Sanyitwine), a top-knot with a circular fringe.

How to get there?

Set-Set-Yo Village is located five miles south of Ngathayauk in NyaungU District.

Local and foreign visitors from Yangon can visit the village through Janhlee Village, five miles and four furlongs north of the NyaungU-Popa Byatta Panset Road. Once you see the signboard "Set-Set-Yo," make a turn and follow the lane for 20 minutes to reach your destination.

Travellers from Mandalay can access the village via the NyaungU or Kyaukpadaung-NyaungU road (nine-mile long) or six miles from Ngathayauk in NyaungU District, or Bagan-NyaungU road (nine miles long).

Why Set-Set-Yo?

The village's name, Set-Set-Yo, means "drip-drop" in Myanmar. The village earned this name from a legend involving a couple from Ngathayauk Village. The child they had was named "Maung Cha Tet", which translates to "the boy crawled upon by termites". According to the legend, the child grew up to become Tabinshwehti, the founding king of the Toungoo Empire.

The village is renowned for its unique Youngpaysu hair-



Exploring Set-Set-Yo: A Glimpse into Myanmar's Cultural Heritage and Natural Beauty



PHOTO CREDIT: KANU

style, worn by residents for hundreds of years. This hairstyle is a custodian of Myanmar's rich cultural legacy, preserving not just a tradition but also a distinct identity. The village monks and government bodies have played crucial roles in preserving this cultural heritage.

Set-Set-Yo has become a popular destination for foreign visitors, especially those interested in observing the traditional Sanyitwine hairstyle. The

village-based tourism began in 2017, attracting global travellers who appreciate not only the ancient temples and pagodas in Bagan but also the unique cultural heritage represented by the Youngpaysu hairstyle.

Why do foreigners love it?

Set-Set-Yo Village Administrator U Aung Naing mentioned that during the previous year's peak season, visitors from Russia and Australia, among others,

were particularly interested in the traditional Sanyitwine hairstyle. Their interpreters conveyed that witnessing this traditional hairstyle deepened their love and interest in Myanmar. The village received more local visitors during the current year, and the residents are grateful for the legacy passed down from their village monks. The Youngpaysu hairstyle has brought many visitors, along with development and transportation

infrastructure. The villagers express their commitment to preserving this hairstyle.

Currently, 55 villagers aged between five and 13 years, and 43 adults don the Youngpaysu hairstyle. Whether tangible or intangible, cultural heritage will disappear if not preserved. The Youngpaysu hairstyle, serving as a tourist attraction, needs protection to pass down to future generations.

Welcome to Set-Set-Yo

Set-Set-Yo is blessed with Bagan-esque charms, adorned with an array of arid flora, including palm, tamarind, neem, acacia, lebbek, and cactus. These trees contribute to keeping the village cool during mornings and evenings in the winter, adding to the landmark beauty of upper Myanmar.

Farming thrives in Set-Set-Yo and surrounding villages, with the cultivation of peanuts,

sesame, and pigeon peas. Additionally, some villagers earn their livelihoods through production, growing wood-apple fruits and plums, and making preserved soya bean.

Upgrading the rocky six-mile stretch between the village and the Byatta Panset Road into an asphalt road has facilitated year-round access to the village for both local and foreign travellers. — Nyein Thu(MNA)/NT

NATIONAL

Weekly market update of dry groceries at Bayintnaung Wholesale Centre

FOR the week from 10 to 17 January 2024, the prices of black gram, pigeon pea, onion, and chili pepper declined.

Onion

Bayintnaung Wholesale market saw the supply of 240,000 visses of onions on 17 January 2024. The wholesale prices ranged from K1,100 to K3,300 per viss depending on the quality, size, and producing areas (Seikphyu, Myittha, and Myingyan) that day. The figures reflected a drop of K1,300-K1,700 per viss within 15 days. The highest price in the Seikphyu market was K1,800 with an entry of K57,500 viss, while the onion fetched only K800-K900 per viss in the Myingyan market that day.

Garlic

The prices of garlic from Aungban, Shan State, stood at K14,500-K15,700 per viss depending on varieties and qualities, whereas Kyukok garlic prices plunged to K9,000-K9,300 per viss on 17 January.

Potato

Chinese potato prices fetched K2,600-K2,900 per viss



A photo shows a retail grocery shop.

on 17 January.

Chili Pepper

The wholesale prices of chili peppers were K10,700-K13,000 per viss for long chili pepper and Moehtaung variety on 17 January.

Those red chilies processed in cold storage fetched K13,500-K14,500 per viss. The price of bell peppers from Sinphyukyun was set at K15,000 per viss.

Rice

The prices hit K78,000-K82,000 per sack of low-grade monsoon rice, K95,000 per sack of Pawkywe variety. The high-grade old Pawsan rice prices were K120,000-K180,000 per sack depending on producing areas (Pyapon, Myaungmya and Shwebo) on 17 January.

Palm Oil

For the week from 15 to 21 January 2023, the wholesale reference price for Yangon Region

was set at K5,250 per viss, up by K295 per viss compared to that of the last week.

Pulses

The prices of various pulses stood at K2,985,000 per tonne of black gram (Fair Average Quality/RC), K3,285,000 per tonne of black gram (Special Quality/RC), K3,447,500 per tonne of pigeon pea (red gram) RC, K3,830 per viss of green gram, and K6,500-K6,700 per viss of chickpea in Yangon's wholesale markets. — TWA/KK

Bicycle use rises again in Rakhine State, with a surprising surge in sales

THE use of bicycles has become widespread again in some townships of Rakhine State, resulting in a surprising surge in bicycle sales, with almost no bicycles left in the market.

Most residents in Taungup and Thandwe townships have turned to bicycles for convenient travel in the current situation, according to residents from Mayin.

"The prices have gone up. Despite the increase, we can't find any, as no more goods are imported due to transportation difficulties. Prices have nearly doubled - from K100,000 to K200,000, and K150,000 to K300,000. Even used bicycles are priced at about K150,000," said a resident.

As a means of transportation, motorcycles were widely used among Taungup residents, but they now have to resort to bicycles again under the current situation.

"Bicycles have been widely used again in Thandwe. Some shops no longer have bicycles for sale, and some are reselling to each other. Prices have gone up compared to previous times," said a Thandwe resident. — MT/ZS

Myanmar participates in 122nd ASEAN-New Delhi Committee meeting

ACCORDING to information released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), discussions on policy matters and cooperation in political, economic, and security affairs between Myanmar and India took place during the 122nd meeting of the ASEAN-New Delhi Committee (ANDC).

The meeting occurred at the Brunei embassy in New Delhi, India, on the morning of 15 January, with Myanmar Ambassador to India U Moe Kyaw Aung in attendance.

During the meeting, Ambassador U Moe Kyaw Aung discussed policy issues, the exchange of visits, and the progress of cooperation in pol-

itics, economics, and security between Myanmar and India.

Ambassadors of ASEAN countries in New Delhi shared their perspectives on enhancing cooperation between the ANDC and the Indian government, as well as facilitating economic relations between India and ASEAN countries.

The alternate chair of the ANDC, Brunei Ambassador Mr Dato Alaihuddin Mohd Taha, explained the performances and activities formulated during the period of holding the chair and handed over ongoing projects to the Cambodian Ambassador Mr Koy Kuong, who will assume the alternate chair of the ANDC. — ASH/TMT

Over 2,300 micro industries officially registered in regions and states

THE Small Scale Industries Department, under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, is presently overseeing the registration process for 13 types of micro industries in regions and states, including the Nay Pyi Taw council area. Currently, 81 per cent of these registrations have been successfully completed.

From April to March of the 2023-2024 financial year, 2,890 registrations were planned, and currently, 2,380 of them have been completed. The 13 types of businesses include foodstuffs,



Crafting Myanmar lacquerware, a form of small-scale cottage industry.

clothing, accommodation consumer goods, household goods, printed materials, raw materials, minerals, agricultural machinery, transportation, electronics, and general industrial activities.

Entrepreneurs can be recognized as MSME members by registering and receiving technical assistance from the Depart-

ment of Small Scale Industries. They can form similar groups with the same nature of business. Additionally, they have opportunities to receive loan support from the State to expand their business, attend local and international workshops, trainings, and exhibitions, and participate in competitions. — TWA/KZW

Pigeon pea prices rebound in Myanmar driven by surging foreign demand

THE price of pigeon peas rebounded to over K3.497 million per tonne on 17 January 2024 after dropping to K3.235 million per tonne on 1 January, reflecting a sharp rise of K260,000 per tonne within three weeks.

A surge in foreign demand amidst bustling domestic market activities raised the pigeon pea price. The price had hit a new record high of K4.15 million per tonne on 8 September 2023.

Myanmar primarily exports black gram, green gram, and pigeon peas to foreign markets. Among them, black gram and pi-

geon peas are mostly delivered to India, while green gram is shipped to China and Europe.

India has growing consumption requirements for black gram and pigeon peas. According to a Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and India signed on 18 June 2021, India will import 250,000 tonnes of black gram and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas (tur) from Myanmar for five consecutive years from the 2021-2022 financial year to the 2025-2026 FY.

This government-to-government pact will not affect

the annual pulses quota set by India. Myanmar's exporters are also entitled to deliver the pulses to India under that annual quota.

Myanmar conveyed 1.15 million tonnes of various pulses worth US\$978 million in the past nine months of the current financial year 2023-2024, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar bagged \$1.47 billion from 1.9 million tonnes of pulses exports last FY 2022-2023, according to the Ministry of Commerce's statistics. — NN/EMM



Pigeon plants bearing ripening pods.

Myanmar exporters advised to assess market conditions for China trade



Quality watermelons seen in the market.

KHWANYO Fruit Depot recommends Myanmar exporters closely monitor supply and demand dynamics and market conditions before exporting to China.

The fruit depot cautions against overly optimistic expectations, citing potential losses based on market conditions. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to avoid missed trade opportunities and migration for jobs. The changing consumer behaviour in China post-COVID influences demand, impacting stakeholders in the supply chain.

Additionally, Myanmar faces competition with Laos in watermelon exports to China, posing challenges for market share retention due to high freight charges.

The current delivery routes

for watermelon and muskmelons through Lweje and Mongla roads face road damage issues, affecting profits as discarded produce increases.

The watermelon export market, primarily to China, confronts persistent challenges amid China's policy changes.

In early February, stringent Chinese Customs inspections restricted truck transport, causing long queues on the Myanmar side. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 and delays in Chinese Customs regulations harmed the quality of Myanmar's watermelon exports to China.

Traders are urged to consider delivery time, pricing, and profitability while exploring new markets beyond China for this perishable fruit. — NN/EM

Coconut-based products expo and competition to take place in Patheingyi on 22-24 Jan

THE three-day coconut-based products expo and competition will be held in Patheingyi city from 22 to 24 January, showcasing coconut-based food products, cosmetics, consumer goods, and handicrafts at the event.

The expo organizing committee will cover the accommodation, food, and travel costs for each entrepreneur, in addition to providing a free expo booth.

Enthusiastic exhibitors are invited to join by contacting the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization (Ayeyawady Re-

gion) at Ph: 09 422468570 / 09 794527381 by 18 January.

Myanmar has been implementing the "Potential Product (coconut) Value Chain" project under the ACEMES-ROK Fund since May 2023 until April 2024, according to the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization. Under that fund, the "Potential Product (coconut) Value Chain" project also includes coconut handicraft courses in the Ayeyawady Region.

This course offers practical approaches to turn waste co-

conut shells into a marketable craft that is commercially valued. The trainees will learn the know-hows of choosing coconut shells, designing and cutting, polishing, drying, and decorating with the use of equipment step by step. A basic drawing subject will be included as well.

The trainees have to practically make coconut crafts such as lamps, DIY lamp shades, curtains, necklaces, keychains, and earrings. They will receive a completion certificate. — NN/EM



Young coconut saplings kept in nursery for sale.

OPINION

Beware of danger of fire for personal and societal safety

FIRE, an age-old companion to humanity, has served both prehistoric and contemporary societies. Despite its potential for destruction, when used judiciously, fire has the power to enhance living standards. However, the peril of fire remains a global concern, affecting not only developing nations but also developed ones.

Now is the time of the open season in Myanmar. Hence, authorities and volunteer organizations consistently advocate for responsible fire usage to prevent devastating outbreaks. Even advanced societies grapple with formidable challenges like forest fires that can rapidly consume vast areas despite the valiant efforts of firefighters, especially during the summer.

Various factors, including negligence, short circuits, overheating, and natural disasters like lightning strikes, can trigger fires. Regardless of the cause, everyone must exercise caution and be equipped with relevant fire-extinguishing tools to respond to potential outbreaks swiftly. Immediate reactions are crucial to minimizing losses and damages. Firefighters' competence, skills, and bravery play a pivotal role in safeguarding lives and properties during fire emergencies.

In 2023, the Yangon Region Fire Services Department reported 1,362 fire incidents nationwide, primarily due to short circuits and electrical issues. These statistics underscore the importance of responsibly handling electronic equipment and maintaining awareness about managing fire outbreaks from electronic problems.

The previous year's breakdown of fire incidents revealed 232 cases in Yangon Region and 183 cases in Shan State. Electrical problems accounted for 456 incidents, negligent actions for 393, and kitchen-related issues for 187. Tragically, these incidents resulted in 77 fatalities, 193 injuries, and the loss of over K35 billion in property.

In 2022, fire-related incidents caused property losses totaling K6.7 billion, with 1,507 reported cases resulting in 96 deaths and 139 injuries. Moreover, fire outbreaks occurred in Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, Kayin and Mon states some 30 times, leaving some dead and injured persons from 1 to 9 January 2024, according to the statistics of the Fire Services Department.

These alarming figures highlight the urgent need for individuals to handle fire with care, not only for their personal safety but also for the well-being of their communities. It is imperative for everyone to embrace the concept that their actions, no matter how small, can have far-reaching consequences on the safety and prosperity of society as a whole. Responsible fire usage is not just an individual responsibility but a collective obligation for the greater good.

AI and robots are causing some concerns for writers in 2023. A man named Gary Dalkin is thinking about how AI is changing writing and what might happen in the future.

Every day, we hear about AI changing writing or publishing. Some recent news includes stories like 'AI using works by Zadie Smith, Stephen King, and Rachel Cusk without permission' (from the Guardian), 'Author using AI to write novels without worrying about losing his job' (Sky News), 'Site Prosecraft, which analyzes fiction, closed after people got upset' (Gizmodo)...

It's clear that AI is changing things very fast. You'd need to read a lot of articles every day to understand what's going on. There are two main problems: we don't know what's happening right now, and we don't know what might happen in the future. This is because AI is a technology that people always talk about, but even the experts don't completely understand it.

There are things we don't know about AI. We don't know how it might change writing, publishing, or even the world. Technology is growing really fast, and people are always finding new ways to use it. We also don't know if people will accept AI in their lives or try to limit its impact. Everything is changing so quickly, and we're in a new frontier where what's possible with technology, what the law allows, and what big and small companies can do all come together in surprising and confusing ways.

One example of this confusion is a website called Prosecraft, which closed down quickly. It was run by a man named Benji Smith. He said his site was for analyzing literature, including thousands of books by many authors. Smith originally created the site to figure out how many words are in different types of fiction. Later, he started analyzing novels to statistically break down thousands of titles. For instance, he used Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, saying it has 26,814 words, a 'vividness' score of 83.93 per cent, and uses passive voice 8.08 per cent of the time. The problem was that Smith used old classics and many new books by living authors, and some people didn't like it. Smith argued he used the texts fairly and didn't make money from it, saying he was a victim caught up in the writing world's fight against AI.

Smith's situation might be a simple example of a small oper-

Challenges and Changes in 2023 and Beyond



It's clear that AI is changing things very fast.

ation using computers to gather statistics about books. They put authors' work into a computer, but it's not far from there to train even more powerful computers. These computers wouldn't just make data about existing books; they would use those books to teach artificial intelligence to write.

Now, let's talk about ChatGPT and similar systems like Google's Bard, Sudowrite, and Writesonic (mostly based on GPT, the technology behind ChatGPT). The problem with these systems is that copying is a big part of their work. This means they couldn't do what they do without learning from many books by professional writers. These writers' work is taken and analyzed without permission to make new technology to replace writers. In simple terms, the work of many writers is taken without asking to create technology that competes directly with human authors.

A person named Alex Reisner wrote in the Atlantic that he got hold of a dataset used by Meta to train an AI called LLaMA. This dataset had over 170,000 pirated books, most published in the last 20 years. It was called Books3 and was also used to train BloombergGPT and GPT-J by EleutherAI. This vast collection includes texts by many authors, like Sarah

Silverman, Richard Kadrey, Christopher Golden, and more, all taken without asking.

Books3 is part of a bigger dataset called The Pile, which has not just books but other digital texts from places like the European Parliament and Wikipedia, as well as subtitles from YouTube videos. Reisner found over 30,000 books from Penguin Random House, 14,000 from HarperCollins, and 7,000 from Macmillan in The Pile. He found novels by famous authors like Jonathan Franzen, Margaret Atwood, and L Ron Hubbard (who founded Scientology and wrote many pulp novels). Reisner couldn't figure out what Books1 contains, but he thinks it might be the Project Gutenberg database of around 70,000 old books. Books2 is likely pirated digital libraries with names like Bibliotik, Library Genesis, and Z-Library, which you can find and download using BitTorrent.

Until recently, authors worried about their books being copied, but using pirated books to teach machines that might replace writers is a much bigger concern.

Simon Rich is a writer from America, and he worked on a book called I Am Code: An Artificial Intelligence Speaks, with an AI named code-davinci-002. He also wrote an article for Time with just the title, 'I'm a Screenwriter: These

AI Jokes Give Me Nightmares,' might sound scary. In the article, he talked about AIs like ChatGPT and said they are deliberately not super good. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, spent a lot of time and money to make it safe and not too creative.

A professor named Rachel Armstrong thinks writing with AI will become very normal like using spell-check. She believes AI will mostly help our writing but might be annoying sometimes. People might even turn it off when it doesn't work well. She thinks we will treat AI like a writing friend, wondering what it thinks but not really knowing its biases.

Simon Rich knows about a more advanced AI called code-davinci-002. He thanks to a friend at OpenAI, he used it and found it can even make funny jokes. He shared made-up news headlines like 'Experts Warn that War in Ukraine Could Become Even More Boring' and 'Budget of New Batman Movie Swells to US\$200M as Director Insists on Using Real Batman.' Maybe one of those made you laugh! Rich thinks AI might be better than human writers in about five years.

Professor Armstrong has a different idea. She thinks AI writing will feel safe and predictable to readers, but some will miss the

wild and risky writing. She looks forward to a time when writers rebel against the AI's usual way of writing, using techniques that confuse the AI. She wants a kind of writing that AI can't fully understand.

A big point here is that no matter how good AI gets at copying human writing, people will still want to read things that come from real human experiences. Computers don't know what it's like to be human, and they never will. AI might take over some writing jobs, like corporate writing, but writers will resist, just like in the WGA strike in the USA. Human-written works might even have a special logo to show they are real. Simon Rich ends by saying he'll keep writing even if technology makes him less needed. He thinks his human need to create something without a clear reason is what makes him special.

Good news and challenges are part of the story about AI. While there's a new and more natural AI called ChatGPT4, and guides on websites like HowTo Geek help make AI text sound more human, Professor Gary Marcus warns about serious problems. He's unsure if generative AI, like ChatGPT, will have the big impact people expect. He compares it to past technologies, like airships, that didn't live up to the hype. He even suggests that the whole generative AI field might not last long.

Another thing to consider is what technology can do and what society decides to allow. Laws are like a balance against technology. For instance, some lawyers in the US got in trouble for using fake information from ChatGPT in court. This shows that people can't always trust what AI creates. Worse, some writers take legal action because AI systems use their work without asking. On 18 August a US judge said AI-created art can't be protected by copyright. This means anyone can copy it, and publishers might not want to invest in books that can be freely

copied right after publication.

This decision is for the US, but it could affect the world, especially English-speaking countries. The US is a big market for English books, and if AI-created works have no legal protection there, it might be the same everywhere. The judge said copyright only protects works made by humans, not AI. This is a strong stance to protect human creativity. So, even though AI is growing, the law ensures human creativity stays safe.

Things are changing fast, but there are good and not-so-good sides to it. ChatGPT, a smart computer programme, is now on Android phones and is part of Microsoft's Bing search engine. It can even 'see' things and has voice functions. But, when you use it, there's a warning that it might give wrong information. It's interesting how 'inaccurate information' is now a big deal.

In the European Union (EU), they made a new law called the Digital Services Act. It's stricter for big tech companies with lots of users. They need to follow rules about how they use people's information. Facebook, one of these big companies, added a page to help users control the information AI uses.

Amazon, the giant online store, limited how many books people could upload using its publishing system because AI made too many books. But not all AI use is bad. With help from Microsoft and MIT, Project Gutenberg made 5,000 old books into audiobooks using AI voices.

The Writers Guild of America (WGA) won against Hollywood Studios, saying AI can't write or help make movie scripts. The Atlantic magazine is also checking which books are used to train AI. They even made a tool to see if your work was used without permission. I found a book I edited with it!

The Author's Guild is suing Open AI for using famous writers' work without asking. People are taking sides, and it shows that good changes are happening. Even though we're not sure what will happen, things created by humans will still be important, and AI-made things won't replace them completely.

(To all writers who are on the same trip and in the same boat.)
Reference: Abridged from the article titled "Robots Write On" in the "Writing Magazine" January 2024

Maldives, Sri Lanka achieve control against Hepatitis B: WHO

The accomplishment is attributed to consistently high coverage of Hepatitis B vaccine doses in infants and a low prevalence of the disease, as confirmed by recent serological surveys in both countries.

MALDIVES and Sri Lanka have achieved control over hepatitis B disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced on Wednesday. This comes after an expert panel verified that the two countries have had consistently high coverage of Hepatitis B vaccine doses in infants and a low prevalence of the deadly disease, corroborated through serological surveys conducted recently in both countries.

"I congratulate and commend the Maldives and Sri Lanka on their achievement which once again demonstrates the earnest efforts being made by the health leaders and officials, said Dr Supamit Chunsuttiwat, chairperson of the Regional Expert Panel for verification of hepatitis B control in Southeast Asia. Notably, the two countries join Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand, who achieved the same feat in 2019, WHO stated in the release. Preventing hepatitis B infection in infancy substantially reduces chronic infections and cases of liver cancer and cirrhosis in adulthood.

Hepatitis B vaccine

The Expert Panel for Verification of Hepatitis B Control in WHO South-East Asia Region reviewed childhood immunization data from the Maldives and Sri Lanka that showed consistent over 90 per cent coverage with Hepatitis B vaccine doses provided during

infancy for the past many years. The experts also reviewed the findings of national surveys conducted among children in 2022-2023, in these countries. "Based on the evidence presented to it, the Expert Panel concluded that the standards required for verification of hepatitis B control have been met in both these countries and hence recommended that this important public health target has been achieved in Maldives and Sri Lanka," said Dr Supamit Chunsuttiwat, chairperson of the Regional Expert Panel for verification of hepatitis B control in Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, hepatitis control continues to be an important public health initiative in the Southeast Asia Region of WHO, which comprises 11 countries and is home to a quarter of the world's population. — ANI



The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that Maldives and Sri Lanka have successfully achieved control over hepatitis B disease. **PHOTO: ANI**

NATIONAL

Technical workshop to emphasize transboundary haze pollution management between Thailand and Myanmar

THE Royal Thai Embassy in Yangon issued a statement recently that the embassy in collaboration with the Pollution Control Department (PCD) of Thailand will co-organize the technical workshop and study visit on Transboundary Haze Pollution Management between Thailand and Myanmar, during 18-27 January 2024 in Thailand.

The said technical work-

shop is a part of the Thai government's effort in solving the problem of Transboundary Haze Pollution Management, widely known as PM 2.5, and one of actions taken following the tripartite leadership meeting among Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand held on 7 April 2023, in which the collaborative approaches were discussed in order to resolve the transbound-

ary haze issues. Thailand expressed the readiness to share the knowledge and experiences to the Myanmar side on the utilization of satellite technology for fire hotspot monitoring, land use benefits, as well as highland agricultural management under the "CLEAR Sky Strategy" of the Thai Government.

In this workshop which will be participated by 20 Myanmar

officials, who are currently working in the field related to Haze Pollution Management in the areas of Thailand-Myanmar border and 10 Thai officials, the Royal Thai Embassy and the Pollution Control Department are also in close cooperation with Thailand's Department of Climate Change and Environment, Meteorological Department Geo-Informatics and

Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA), Asian Institute of Technology, Thaicom Public Company Limited, and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. The Embassy and organizations concerned sincerely hope that the workshop will help alleviate the problem of PM 2.5 in both Thailand and Myanmar in the near future.

— GNLM

Counter-argument to false information

Misinformation fabricated: Residents in Thaton leave as affected by heavy weapon explosion by Tatmadaw



A screen-shot of misinformation from Than Lwin Times.

FALSE news is intentionally fabricated on social media, suggesting that nearly 400 local people from Thaton Township, Mon State, had to flee due to the explosion of heavy weapons fired by the Tatmadaw, despite no battle occurring.

According to a security official, Tatmadaw security outposts did not shell heavy weapons. However, terrorists did fire at Tatmadaw security columns conducting security operations for regional stability with heavy

weapons and dropped bombs. Those drone bombs, drop bombs, and heavy weapons landed in residential villages and exploded.

Therefore, villagers had to escape to safe places, according to responsible security officials from the respective area and other sources.

Malicious news outlets are circulating misinformation to cover the actions committed by the PDF terrorists and so-called ethnic insurgents.

— MNA/ TMT

Onion price falls and market not yet stable



Some pieces of onion caught in a photo.

THE price of onions, a major ingredient in Myanmar's widely consumed dishes, is falling, and the market is still unstable, according to onion traders.

"Onion prices have been falling in the last few days. It is only around K 2,000 in the villages, and when we resell it in the towns, it is at most K 2,700. The market is not stable," said an onion merchant.

Prices have been declining for a week, with no sign of recovery yet.

"Since the current village price is K 2,000, what we used to buy for K 2,600 previously has come down by K 600. It has been a week. I think it will go down further. Due to the route conditions, we have a lot of onions in our area. I don't think the price will go up," commented a trader.

Current onion prices per viss are K2,700 for Myittha (small), K 3,200 for medium, K 3,300 for large, K 2,700 for mixed, K2,200 for Myingyan (small), and K 2,500 for medium, according to Super Onion Trading. — Thit Taw/ZN

Khit Thit Media spreads falsehoods about armed conflict in Natogyi, Mandalay Region

THE malicious media outlet, Khit Thit Media, has disseminated false news accusing security forces of shooting two citizens during armed conflicts in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region, on Tuesday.

The fake news report claimed that terrorists associated with the self-proclaimed People's Defence Force (PDF) drone-bombed the Natogyi police station and an office under the Ministry of Construction. It additionally alleged that the security forces destroyed two drones and shot two residents to death in Ywagyi Village.

Officials in charge clarified that terrorists associated with PDF launched a heavy weapon attack on Natogyi from a location 500 metres southeast at 2:45 pm on Tuesday. Their weaponry fell and exploded between the Natogyi construction compound and the Myoma Basic Education High School, causing injury to a civilian who had come to pick up their child.

PDF terrorists are apparently attempting to conceal their actions by spreading misinformation through malicious media channels.

— MNA/NT



Night school for young people attracts youngsters in Wuhan, C China

Night school classes, once popular in China during the 1980s, are experiencing a resurgence among the younger generation, catering to their desire for a more enriched lifestyle, with courses ranging from calligraphy and Chinese painting to yoga, baking, and jazz dance.

STUDENTS learn jazz dance during a night school class in Wuchang District of Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, 14 December 2023. Night classes were very popular in China in the 1980s, when many young people sought to learn new skills to make a living. Today, these classes are gaining popularity again among China's younger generations, meeting their needs for an enriched lifestyle.

In late November, a night

school for young people was launched by the Wuhan municipal committee of the Communist Youth League of China and soon won youngsters' hearts, with all nine courses set in the first phase fully applied for.

Now the night school classes are available all around Wuhan, serving more than 3,000 attendees with a variety of courses, such as calligraphy, Chinese painting, yoga, baking, latte art, jazz dance, ukulele and the like. — Xinhua



Instructor Wang Kuolin (1st L) teaches students how to play the ukulele during a night school class in Hanyang District of Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, 10 January 2024. PHOTO: DU ZIXUAN/XINHUA



The transformation of the Miyako Fish Market reflects a combination of resilience in the face of natural disasters and an embrace of technology to enhance business operations and international trade. PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/PEXELS

Japan: Miyako fish market in Iwate attracting buyers and sellers

The Miyako Fish Market, previously heavily damaged, has undergone renovations and embraced digitalization, with sellers now using tablets to manage and share information about fish and seafood.

A tsunami struck the coastal region of Iwate in Japan in March 2011, after which a large tide embankment was constructed to prevent tsunami damage.

Miyako Fish Market was badly damaged after the tsunami. Now, a newly renovated market has got ready for digital gear. Sellers are using tablets to collect and share the amount of fish and other sea food items.

Minemura Tadashi, the Chief Director of JETRO Sendai, said, "For the last three years, we have spoken to our customers only through online mode. We could not get our buy-

ers to see the site and taste the products. This time, I hope that overseas buyers check products on site and conclude contracts."

Foreign buyers visited the marine product company and were introduced to its facility. They were offered the tastes of Iwate oysters, scallops, abalone, and octopus. The port of Ishinomaki, which was damaged by the tsunami in March 2011, is now the fifth-largest fish collection centre in Japan.

The length of the harbour is 875 metres. It is a Guinness world record where various fishes and Sanriku marine products

are landed throughout the year.

Kinka brand Mackerels, which is used in making Sushi, has become a world brand.

Akira Yokoyama, a buyer from Singapore, said, "We are particularly interested in scallops, including large sizes. We are currently in the process of exchanging emails with the company we just met in this business meeting. Kinds of fish are changing because of the change of seawater temperature. Utilising this visit to collect the latest information and expand export business." — ANI

Lynne Marta, 'Joe Kidd' actor dies at 78 after battling cancer

Lynne Marta's contributions to both film and television spanned a diverse range of shows and genres, marking her presence in the entertainment industry.

AMERICAN actor Lynne Marta, who acted in films such as 'Joe Kidd' and 'Footloose,' has died, Hollywood Reporter reported. She was 78.

Marta died on 11 January at her Los Angeles home following a battle with cancer, according to her friend Chris Saint-Hilaire.

She also appeared in episodes of Aaron Spelling's 'The Mod Squad,' 'The Rookies,' 'Starsky & Hutch,' 'Charlie's Angels,' 'Vega\$, and 'Matt Houston,' as well as Quinn Martin's 'The F.B.I.,' 'Dan August,' 'Cannon,' 'The Streets of San Francisco,' 'Barnaby Jones,' 'The

Manhunter,' and 'Caribe.'

Marta, the younger of two daughters, was born October 30, 1945, in Somerville, New Jersey. Her father, George, served as New Jersey's commissioner of air and water pollution.

She began her career on the syndicated adolescent dance

show 'The Lloyd Thaxton Show.'

Her television credits include 'Then Came Bronson,' 'Gunsmoke,' 'Kojak,' 'Medical Centre,' 'Marcus Welby,' 'M.D.,' 'The Rockford Files,' 'Knight Rider,' 'Designing Women,' and 'Law & Order.' — ANI



Throughout her career, Marta appeared in various TV shows, including Aaron Spelling's 'The Mod Squad,' 'Charlie's Angels,' and Quinn Martin's 'The F.B.I.' and 'Barnaby Jones.' PHOTO: ANI

ECONOMY WORLD

China unveils measures to develop “silver” economy

Prioritizing senior citizens' well-being, efforts are urged to cultivate industry leaders, stimulate senior citizen consumption, and nurture new business models related to smart health and elderly care, including technologies like nursing robots and biotechnologies for age-related illnesses.



Robot nurses often incorporate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and sensors to interact with patients and adapt to changing healthcare needs. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CHINA has recently released a guideline to strengthen the “silver” economy as part of efforts to address the challenges of an aging population.

The guideline, issued by the General Office of the State Council, specifies measures to expand, standardize, cultivate industrial clusters, and improve

the branding of the silver economy. Prioritizing the well-being of its senior citizens, the country must improve food and health care services for the population and expedite the development of elderly care institutions, according to the guideline.

It anticipates the establishment of around ten industrial parks to develop the silver economy nationwide, urging efforts to cultivate industry leaders and stimulate senior citizen consumption. Efforts should also focus on nurturing new business models related to smart health and elderly care, as exemplified by the development of nursing and housekeeping robots, along with biotechnologies that help alleviate age-related illnesses, the guideline says. — Xinhua

UAE launches new ‘EcoMark’ green accreditation framework for MSMEs

THE UAE has announced plans to develop the first-ever sustainability accreditation framework explicitly for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). EcoMark Global Accreditation has been designed to boost the competitiveness of MSMEs in the global green

economy by streamlining and standardising the regulatory processes surrounding sustainability benchmarking worldwide. The EcoMark certification, which is based on ISO standards and digitally enabled, will include a full suite of resources to help MSMEs attain

EcoMark status, covering document requirement guidelines and a roadmap to progress from basic to advanced levels of sustainability, and a standardized application process and complete eligibility criterion for accreditors in the participating countries. — ANI



The EcoMark certification, based on ISO standards and digitally enabled, includes resources such as guidelines, roadmaps, and standardized application processes to help MSMEs achieve EcoMark status.

PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE/ANI

Viet Nam’s business confidence recovers: report

In 2023, Viet Nam experienced a record high in new business establishments, with nearly 160,000 enterprises established, marking a 7.2 per cent year-on-year surge, according to the General Statistics Office.

VIET Nam’s business confidence has recovered with more investors optimistic about the country’s current macro-economic situation, according to the Private Economic Development Research Board under the Prime Minister’s Administrative Reform Advisory Council.

Compared to the board’s April survey, the rate of enterprises that intend to expand their business scale strongly doubled, Viet Nam News Agency reported Tuesday.

That increase was also seen in assessments of capital access prospects, market outlook and efficiency of local administra-

tion’s support, showing stronger confidence in businesses, according to the report.

The current rate of firms assessing the economic situation of their industry as positive or very positive was 2.5 times higher than that in the April survey, and the rate of positive assessments about the macro-economic outlook for the next 12 months was nearly three times higher.

According to the General Statistics Office, nearly 160,000 enterprises were established in Viet Nam in 2023, posting a record high and a surge of 7.2 per cent year-on-year. — Xinhua



Photo taken on 27 July 2022 shows a view of Trong Mai Islet or Rock of “The Kissing Cocks” in Viet Nam’s northern Quang Ninh province. **PHOTO: VNA/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA**

US Fed ‘within striking distance’ of inflation target: official

THE US Federal Reserve is “within striking distance” of reaching its long-term inflation target and could begin cutting interest rates this year, a senior official said Tuesday.

“I am becoming more confident that we are within striking distance of achieving a sustainable level of two per cent PCE inflation,” Fed Governor Christopher Waller said at a virtual event, referring to the Fed’s favored inflation gauge.

He added that recent data has made him more certain than he has been since 2021 that inflation is on the right path. Members of the Fed’s rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) recently voted to hold interest rates at a 22-year high, and penciled in up to three rate cuts for this year, citing progress against inflation. — AFP

Cape Town airport sees record number of int'l passengers in 2023

The 2023 figures exceeded the 2019 record of 2.6 million passengers, marking a noteworthy increase despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOUTH Africa's Cape Town International Airport witnessed a record-breaking number of two-way international passengers in 2023, with more than 2.8 million travellers passing through its gates. This eclipsed the previous benchmark of 2.6 million passengers recorded in 2019, the year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a

statement posted on the official website of the Western Cape Tourism, Trade, and Investment Promotion Agency.

"Additionally, the total two-way international passenger figures for 2023 have nearly doubled over the past decade from 1.5 million two-way international passengers recorded in 2013," read the statement. "This significant increase in passengers showcases the impressive growth in demand for Cape Town and the Western Cape as a premier travel destination." — Xinhua



The file photo shows the logo of Cape Town International Airport on a window at Cape Town International Airport, South Africa, 6 August 2021. PHOTO: LYU TIANRAN/ XINHUA



Vehicles run at the Central Business District (CBD) in Chaoyang District in Beijing, capital of China, 6 June 2022. PHOTO: JU HUANZONG/ XINHUA

China's home prices fall in December

In first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen), new home prices decreased by 0.4%, while resold home prices dropped by 1.1% last month.

MAJOR Chinese cities reported falling home prices in December compared to the previous month, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed Wednesday. In the four first-tier

cities, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, prices of new homes edged down 0.4 per cent last month, while that of resold homes dropped 1.1 per cent, according to the data. Prices

of both new homes and resold homes in 31 second-tier cities and 35 third-tier cities in general also went down in December from a month earlier, the data showed. — Xinhua

Japanese shipping firms suspend Red Sea sailings

JAPAN'S three major shipping firms said Wednesday they are joining other major companies in suspending routes through the Red Sea over Huthi rebel attacks on vessels in the vital waterway.

"We have suspended navigation through the Red Sea by all ships we operate," a spokesman for Nippon Yusen, also known as NYK Line, told AFP, adding the decision was to "ensure the safety of crews".

Two other major Japanese shipping firms — Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha and Mitsui OSK Lines — have also suspended navigation through the Red Sea, company spokespersons said. — AFP

ECOSTART MYANMAR COMPANY LIMITED (the "Company")

Notice under Section 147, 152 (a) of the Insolvency Law and Rule 9 and 15 of the Insolvency Rules (Members' Voluntary Winding Up)

As per special resolutions duly passed in writing on 8.1.2024 by all of the members of the company:

1. The process of members' voluntary winding up will proceed and take effect from 8.1.2024
2. U Aung Nay Myo (Advocate No.17955), member of Myanmar Association of Insolvency Practitioners (MAIP. 00121) shall be and is hereby appointed as liquidator of the Company for the purpose of such members' voluntary winding up and is authorised to carry out the Company's affairs in respect of such winding up; and
3. All of the creditors (if any) of the Company are required to contact the liquidator before 18.2.2024 with detailed particulars of their claim attached with complete supporting documents. The Company shall not take any responsibility for or settle any debts that are claimed and submitted after such date.

U Aung Nay Myo

LL.B, D.B.L, D.I.L, D.I.P.L, Advocate (No.17955), Liquidator (MAIP.00121)

Level 16, Unit 1605, Sule Square 221, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon.
Tel: 09-952211180

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CONTRIVIA VOY.NO. (063N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CONTRIVIA VOY.NO. (063N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

(ONE) OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2402S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL BLESSING VOY.NO. (2402S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RUIDA 19 VOY.NO. (104564)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RUIDA 19 VOY.NO. (104564)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-1-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT-3** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

ROLLING UPDATES WORLD

Kuwait forms new government

Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah approved the nominated cabinet members.



The National Assembly (parliament) in Kuwait City, Kuwait. PHOTO: ASAD/XINHUA/FILE

KUWAIT'S newly appointed Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah completed the formation of his new government on Wednesday, official news agency KUNA reported.

Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah approved members of the new cabinet nominated by the prime minister, which

consists of 13 ministers, according to KUNA.

Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya was appointed foreign minister, while Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah was named as deputy prime minister, minister of defence, and acting minister of interior.

Sheikh Mishal became Kuwait's 17th ruler on 20 December 2023, succeeding his half-brother, Sheikh Nawaf

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who had passed away at the age of 86.

On the same day, he accepted the resignation of the former cabinet, led by Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the son of the late emir. The new emir appointed Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as prime minister on 4 January. — Xinhua

“India’s G20 Presidency ensured gender issue not reduced to sidelines”: Smriti Irani at Davos

Irani stated that India's G20 Presidency elevated gender issues from civil society action to the centre stage of global discussions, with PM Modi urging economies worldwide to prioritize women's issues in policy actions.

UNION Minister Smriti Irani said on Tuesday that the New Delhi G20 summit ensured that the gender issue was discussed in the mainstream and highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to ensure that women's issues must be addressed through concrete policy actions.

“India's G20 Presidency ensured that the gender issue was not reduced to the sidelines. Gender, even before India's presidency was always compelled to depend on civil society action.

PM Modi brought it to the centre stage and implored



Union Minister Smriti Irani. PHOTO: X@FOLLOWCII/ANI

economies across the world to ensure issues of women are addressed through concrete policy actions and the

multiple layers of governance has reflected that resolve,” Union Minister Irani said. — ANI

TOP NEWS

Fireworks factory explodes in central Thailand, killing at least 17

AT least 17 people were killed in a fireworks factory explosion in central Thailand, local media reported.

Local rescuers were notified at around 3:30 p.m. local time when the fireworks factory in Suphan Buri province caught fire and was later destroyed following the explosion, according to Thai news outlet Thairath. Images taken at the scene showed debris scattered in a paddy field more than 100 metres away from the explosion. — Xinhua

US-bound Japanese airliner returns to Tokyo after man bites cabin attendant: media

A flight from Tokyo to the US west coastal city of Seattle operated by Japan's All Nippon Airways had to return to the Haneda airport in Tokyo on Wednesday after a passenger reportedly bit a cabin attendant's arm, local media reported. The 55-year-old man, who is believed to be a US citizen, was arrested by Tokyo police upon landing on suspicion of causing injury to the cabin attendant, according to the national news agency Kyodo. — Xinhua

New Zealand's first 'refugee' MP Golriz Ghahraman resigns over allegations of shoplifting



Ghahraman, a former UN human rights lawyer and the first refugee sworn into the country's Parliament in 2017, acknowledged falling short and expressed apologies, citing her mental health as the reason for stepping down. PHOTO: ANI

A New Zealand legislator, Golriz Ghahraman resigned on Tuesday after claims surfaced that she had shoplifted from two clothing stores, which she said were caused by stress and hurt to her mental health, according to The New York Times.

Ghahraman, a 43-year-old former United Nations human rights lawyer from Iran, rose to attention in 2017 as the first refugee to be sworn in as a member of the country's Parliament.

“I fell short. I'm sorry,” said the lawmaker, Golriz Ghahraman, in a statement on Tuesday,

adding that “The best thing for my mental health is to resign as a member of Parliament.”

Ghahraman, who made no mention of theft in her statement, claimed she couldn't explain her behaviour since it was “not rational in any way.” Following the medical treatment, she said, “I understand I'm not well,” adding that a mental health specialist she was seeing claimed her behaviour was consistent with “recent events giving rise to extreme stress response”, and was tied to prior trauma, The New York Times reported. — ANI

SPORTS

2024 Sky Net Sepak Takraw Invitational Tourney to be held

THE 2024 Sky Net Sepak Takraw Invitational Tournament will feature 16 teams. The competition, scheduled from 21 to 28 January, will be hosted by the Myanmar Sepak Takraw Federation and organized by SKYNET. It will be broadcast live on SKYNET Sports 4 and SKYNET Sports HD.

This marks the first-time hosting of the Sepak Takraw competition in Myanmar. It

will include six teams for the men's 4-person competition, six teams for the men's regu competition, and four teams for the women's regu competition, making a total of 16 participating teams.

The winners of the men's



The press conference for 2024 Sky Net Sepak Takraw Invitational Tourney in progress.

4-person competition will receive K3 million, with the first-runners up getting K2 million. Similarly, the winners

of the men's regu competition will earn K2.5 million, while the first-runners up will collect K1.5 million. The winners of the wom-

en's regu competition will secure K1.2 million, and the first-runners up will receive K800,000 in cash awards. — TWA/KZL



FC Barcelona and coach Xavi Hernandez face a crucial test in the Copa del Rey last-16 tie against Unionistas de Salamanca. PHOTO: FC BARCELONA

Unionistas to test Barca after Supercup humiliation

Barcelona, coming off a 4-1 defeat to Real Madrid in the Supercup final, travels to play Unionistas de Salamanca, a team in the third category of the Spanish game (RFEF I).

FC Barcelona and its coach Xavi Hernandez face a vital test on Thursday night when they visit the singular Unionistas de Salamanca in their last-16 tie in the Copa del Rey.

Barcelona travels to play the team that play in the RFEF I (third category of the Spanish game) after it was comprehensively beaten 4-1 by Real Madrid in the final of the Supercup in Saudi Arabia on Sunday night.

Real Madrid's superiority over a Barca side that looked sluggish in midfield and attack and chaotic in defence, hasn't set alarm bells ringing, because

they were ringing before the game, it has merely increased their volume, as it starkly exposed the problems in Xavi's side.

Xavi is in a no-win situation on Thursday, if his side qualifies for the quarterfinals against a rival two levels below it, it is merely fulfilling expectations of what a top-flight team should do. If it loses, however, it would mean the end of its most realistic chance of winning a title this season and the humiliation could see Xavi sacked.

The Barca coach has a long injury list to contend with, as Inigo Martinez, Raphinha, Gavi,

Marc Andre Ter Stegen, Joao Cancelo and Marcos Alonso are all sidelined.

Xavi's main task is to sort out a defence which looked to hold a high-line on Sunday, but lacked coordination, with Jules Kounde and Ronald Araujo both struggling and with Kounde looking very unhappy at right back.

The coach could move Andreas Christensen into midfield to give more bite, which would give Frenkie de Jong more freedom of movement and allow Roberto to play on the right and Kounde in the middle of defence. — Xinhua

Gangwon 2024 set to build "a new legacy", says IOC president Bach

During his visit to the Athletes Village in Gangneung, South Korea, Bach praised the quality of accommodation and facilities, noting that athletes are very satisfied, and he affirmed that everything is set for a successful Games.



International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach (R) chats with athletes during his visit to the 2024 Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) Village, in Gangneung, South Korea 17 January 2024. PHOTO: ZHU WEI/XINHUA

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach said the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) Gangwon 2024 is set to build "a new legacy" for "the next generation of athletes," during a visit that he paid to check the preparation status for Games in the Athletes Village in Gangneung, South Korea, on Wednesday.

Bach praised the facilities of the Village: "I'm really very, very impressed by the quality of the accommodation and what I am

hearing from the athletes, they are all very happy." With two days to go before the Opening Ceremony, The IOC chief added that all is set for a "successful Games".

"For the athletes, I think it's a wonderful experience to compete in the venues their idols have been competing in just six years ago and whom they are following. These young athletes are carrying this legacy on toward the next generation of athletes. So it's a true success story," he concluded. — Xinhua



This aerial photo taken on 11 July 2023 shows photovoltaic panels in Zhangwu County in northeast China's Liaoning Province.

PHOTO: LONG LEI/XINHUA

Global cooperation required for energy transition

GLOBAL cooperation is needed for the energy transition required to deal with climate change, participants said at the 54th World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting being held in Davos, Switzerland this week.

At a session on “energy and rivalry” on Tuesday, Indian minister for petroleum and natural gas Hardeep Singh Puri urged the world to deal with energy challenges pragmatically, a call that was echoed by European Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson.

The session addressed how countries

are increasingly competing to diversify their global energy supplies, including oil, gas and clean energy solutions.

Puri underlined India's commitment to sustainability and a green energy transition, despite facing geopolitical challenges.

Shunichi Miyanaga, board chairman of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, told the panel that private sectors and businesses around the world should invest in carbon neutrality “regardless of the political situation”.

“We should continue innovations,

consistency, implementation and having a long-term vision,” he said, adding that investors need to continue their efforts in innovating new technologies for green energy.

Addressing another session on “transforming energy demand,” Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), stressed the importance of transitioning to clean energy sources. This is urgent to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the primary drivers of climate change, Birol said. — Xunhua

A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR THE DEMOCRATS

US Democratic rebels send a strong message to Biden by voting to freeze aid to Israel

FURTHER complicating the situation for President Joe Biden, a group of Senate Democrats on Tuesday, voted in favour of advancing a resolution to potentially freeze US military aid to Israel, The Hill reported.

The resolution sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders sends a pointed message to President Biden that the war in Gaza is becoming a major problem for the Democrats.

The Senate voted 72 to 11 to reject the resolution, but the number of Democrats who supported the measure reflects rising dissatisfaction within a section of the party over the civilian casualties in Gaza, which has now reportedly crossed 24,000, as per The Hill. Nine Democrats voted with Sanders, as did Republican Senator Rand Paul (Ky.), a frequent critic of US foreign aid.

Sanders, the Senate's leading critic of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the siege and invasion of Gaza called it “immoral.” — ANI

“Great time for Indian companies to invest in Russia”: Moscow Minister Sergey Cheremin

Sergey Cheremin, Moscow City Minister, emphasized the “great partnership” between India and Russia, encouraging Indian companies to invest in the Russian market, particularly in the high technology sector.

INDIA and Russia enjoy a “great partnership”, and it is a great time for Indian companies to invest in the Russian market, Minister of Moscow City, Sergey Cheremin said on Wednesday.

Speaking to ANI, Cheremin, who is here in India, said the bilateral trade between both countries has grown in recent times and more investment can

be initiated into the high technology sector of both countries.

Cheremin, who is the Head of the Department for External Economic and International Relations of Moscow, also launched Moscow's pavilion at the 31st Convergence India and 9th Smart Cities India Expo. “This is the first time we are participating in this event.



Cheremin launched Moscow's pavilion at the 31st Convergence India and 9th Smart Cities India Expo, expressing Moscow's interest in collaboration with Indian cities in developing smart cities. PHOTO: ANI

“We (Moscow) are one of the most dynamic cities. Recently, we were awarded by the United States Habitat as the number one city in the world for modernization. This is because Moscow implemented digitalisation in all the municipal spheres.

“We use digital solutions in education and healthcare,” he said. He further elaborated on how Indian cities and Moscow can collaborate in the development of smart cities and the success of India's smart cities mission. — ANI